



Photo by John Bryson

FRANCIS GARY POWERS displays a model of the U-2 spy plane he flew over the Soviet Union in 1960 at his home in Burbank, Calif.

International Incident

On May 1, 1960, five Soviet soldiers manned their post at an anti aircraft station 1,200 miles inside the Soviet Union.

They were Sgt. A. Fedorov, Pvt. A. Baiborodin, Lance Cpl. A. Kuznetsov, Pvt. V. Turkir and Pvt. B. Kondratyev. They activated their anti aircraft weapon and brought down a foreign plane from an altitude of several miles. Their marksmanship, plus other factors, helped set off one of the most explosive international incidents of the decade.

The pilot, who parachuted to safety, was Francis Gary Powers, conducting a surveillance mission for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. His capture not only exposed to the world some of the most secret espionage activities of the United States, but also put a crucial strain on U.S. relations with its Western Allies.

The incident put the United States in the embarrassing position of having to acknowledge — after it had denied — that overflights of the Soviet Union were part of a national policy. It also disclosed that the U.S. was spying on its Allies in some instances.

Andrei A. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, was moved to warn the world that any aircraft that "again dares to make a sortie into our borders will be smashed to smithereens."

Premier Khrushchev, speaking before the Supreme Soviet, declared, "We must allocate our defense appropriations in such a way as to maintain our reliable rocket weapons at the ready in order to be always prepared to give a fitting reply . . ." to any aggressors. He urged the Supreme Soviet and the commander of Soviet rocket weapons: "... do not rely on God but better train your troops and master the technical equipment . . . so that the rocket troops would be capable of dealing a devastating retaliatory blow at any moment."

President Eisenhower, who was planning a visit to the Soviet Union, was suddenly not welcome.

A summit conference of the Big Four powers was planned in Paris in early May. It collapsed before it could begin.

Powers was given a 10-year sentence on Aug. 19, 1960, for spying, but eventually was freed by Russia on Feb. 10, 1962, in exchange for Col. Rudolf Abel, the Russian spy who had been imprisoned in the United States.

Meantime there was a serious question in Powers' mind: how did the Soviets learn the secret of height-finding radar? Flights over Soviet territory had been going on for four years and, Powers is sure, the Soviets were aware of them. But, until 1960 they had not had the key information — which the United States did have — concerning height-finding radar and the intricacies of the U-2, the plane in which Powers was flying.

In the research for his book, "Operation Overflight," he developed a possibility of how the Soviet Union could have learned about the secrets of the U-2. His book, excerpts of which are starting today, is the first time Powers has spoken out publicly concerning the details of that flight.